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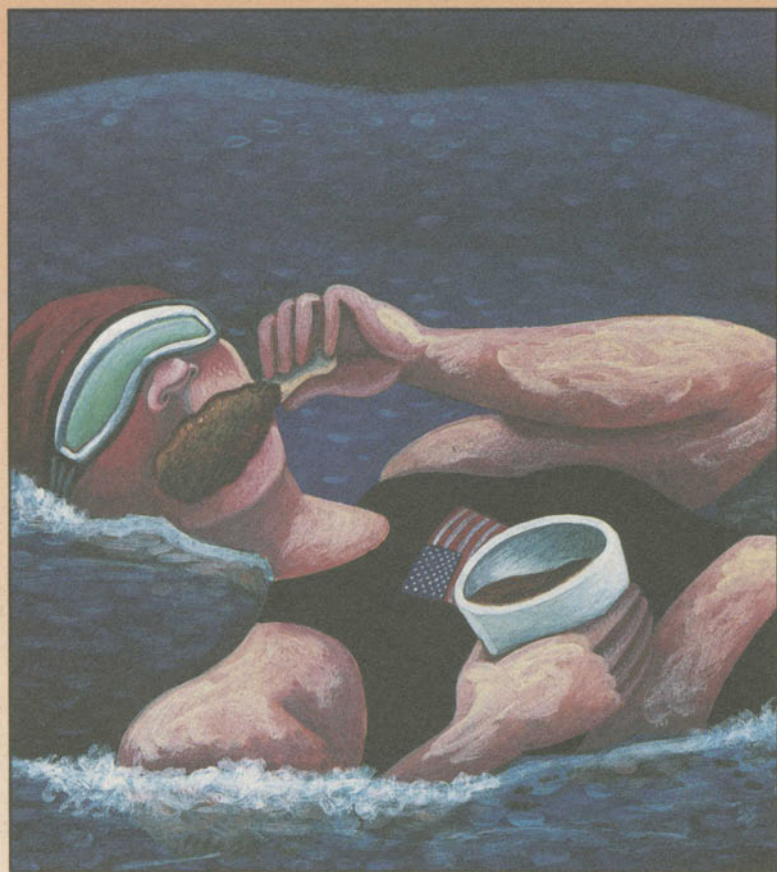
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April 2000
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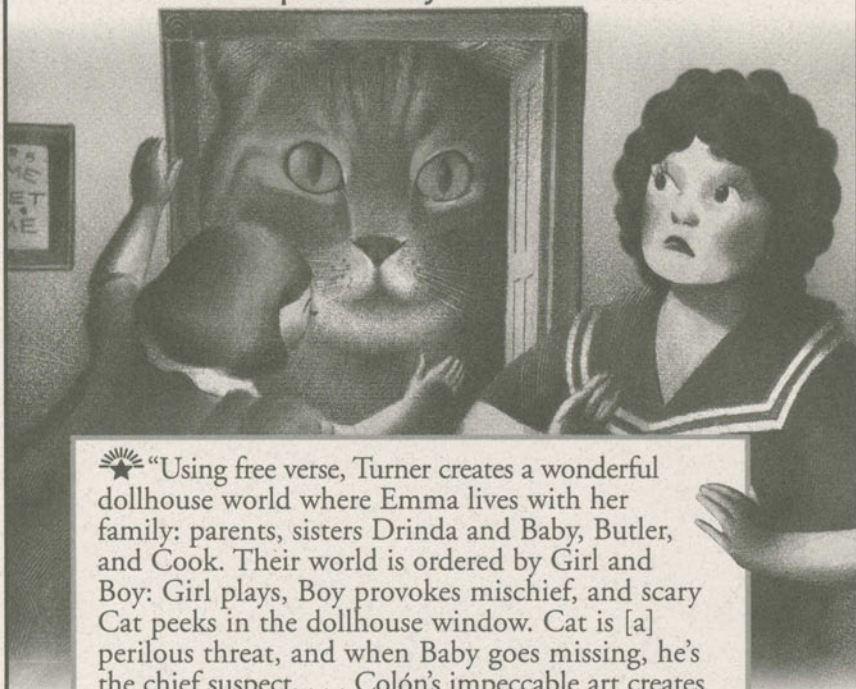
University of Illinois Press

★ ALA Booklist stars

Secrets from the Dollhouse

by Ann Turner

Full-color pictures by Raúl Colón



★ "Using free verse, Turner creates a wonderful dollhouse world where Emma lives with her family: parents, sisters Drinda and Baby, Butler, and Cook. Their world is ordered by Girl and Boy: Girl plays, Boy provokes mischief, and scary Cat peeks in the dollhouse window. Cat is [a] perilous threat, and when Baby goes missing, he's the chief suspect. . . . Colón's impeccable art creates a dollhouse world that is fully realized . . . [in a] lovely mix of evocative words and appealing art. This one's for all doll lovers." — Starred review / *Booklist*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

April 2000
Vol. 53 No. 8



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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

America's Champion Swimmer: Gertrude Ederle

by David A. Adler; illus. by Terry Widener

Picture-book biographies for younger readers are problematic. Theoretically, the format precludes depth and scope and limits such a book's possibilities, since thirty-two pages will only hold so much information; there's also the difficulty of writing for the young reading audience instead of down to them. Nevertheless, the demand for such biographies is great, and, thankfully, authors, illustrators, and publishers have risen to the occasion. Diane Stanley, Don Brown, and Jeanette Winter have all produced respected picture-book biographies that embrace brevity's limits and take full advantage of format. As a team, Adler (himself an author of many such titles) and Widener made their debut in this genre with the excellent *Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man* (BCCB 4/97). Their latest offering is further proof that they have a marked talent for this invaluable genre.

Champion swimmer Gertrude "Trudy" Ederle was seven years old when she learned to swim and twenty years old when she swam the English Channel. She was the first woman to complete the channel swim and she broke the all-time record for swimmers up to that date. In a few choice opening words, Adler makes certain the reader gets a sense of the position of women in Ederle's day: "In 1906 women were kept out of many clubs and restaurants. In most states they were not allowed to vote. Many people felt a woman's place was in the home. But Gertrude Ederle's place was in the water."

The writing style is colloquial without being condescending, and the text has the flavor of an oft-told family story streamlined to highlight the most exciting points. The biographer wisely sticks to his subject's relevant formative experiences: Ederle's increasing swimming prowess; her big swim (seventeen miles) from lower Manhattan to Sandy Hook, New Jersey; her setting of twenty-nine U.S. and world records; and her three Olympic gold medals. After carefully placing the champion swimmer in the context of her home, family, and society, Adler then settles in for a calm look at her two attempts to swim the channel. Given Ederle's day and age, her decision to attempt to swim the English Channel was almost as important as her actual success. She was front-page news: "Many people were sure Trudy couldn't do it. A newspaper editorial declared that Trudy wouldn't make it and that women must admit 'they would remain forever the weaker sex.' It didn't matter to Trudy what people said or wrote. She was going to swim the channel."

The illustrations that accompany the succinct but informative text are equally effective. Widener's monumental figures and 'scapes have humor as well as scope, and the thick opacity of the paints gives a concreteness to the compositions that is reinforced by the sturdy lines and soft yet sculptural shapes. It's clear from words and pictures that Ederle came from a close family: her father was a staunch supporter who taught her how to swim; her sister Margaret was her assis-

tant (and cheerleader) through both channel attempts. (Widener's acrylics show the closeness between the sisters in scenes depicting Margaret coating Trudy with lanolin and heavy grease to protect her from the icy water and cheering her on in various swims.) Contrasting values provide opportunities for dramatic emphasis, such as the white of a lifeboat against the blue of the sea, or the small swimmer and her tracking boat against the hugeness of the rough water. Unusual perspectives enhance the eye-catching compositions, encouraging the viewer to take a closer look at the determined swimmer's adventures at sea.

The author's admiration for Ederle's athletic and other accomplishments is obvious from the tone of his text. He evokes a sense of his subject's time and, without belaboring the point, indicates that Ederle's success came as much from indifference to the dictates of an unencouraging society as it did from her determination to complete her task. Adler makes sure that readers understand the magnitude of Ederle's achievement, both in the body of the text and in the final note, which discusses the hazards of swimming the channel and Ederle's later accomplishments. Bemoaning the fact that Women's History Month has already passed? Do a hero display and put Ms. Ederle front and center. (Imprint information appears on p. 269.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AASENG, NATHAN *Construction: Building the Impossible*. Oliver, 2000 [144p] illus. with photographs (Innovators)
ISBN 1-881508-59-5 \$19.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-10

RICHE, JASON *Weapons: Designing the Tools of War*. Oliver, 2000 [144p] illus. with photographs (Innovators)
ISBN 1-881508-60-9 \$19.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-10

The latest entries in the Innovators series (see Mulcahy's *Medical Technology*, BCCB 7/97) continue to examine those great leaps of inventiveness and tiny tweaks of technology that prove pivotal within a given field of endeavor. Aaseng covers seven massive projects of architecture and civil engineering—Imhotep's step pyramid, the Thames Tunnel, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, the Panama Canal, the Hoover Dam, and the Empire State Building. Richie's military innovations include the submarine, revolver, battleship, torpedo, automatic machine gun, tank, and ballistic missile. Each volume is organized into structured chapters separated into sections on background, "The Breakthrough," and "The Result," but each author employs a distinctive voice and approach. Richie's subject lends itself to a more continuous treatment, with each escalation of offensive and defensive armament contributing to an ongoing dialectic of death. Aaseng, on the other hand, demonstrates how modern grand-scale engineering projects seem to rely less on astonishing invention than on brilliant feats of organization of manpower and

material. Each can provide a chapter's worth of information (plus glossary, index, and extensive bibliography) for researchers on a specific quest or a full afternoon's reading for kids who camp out in the 600s. EB

ADLER, DAVID A. *America's Champion Swimmer: Gertrude Ederle*; illus. by Terry Widener. Gulliver/Harcourt, 2000 [32p]

ISBN 0-15-201969-3 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-4

See this month's Big Picture, p. 267, for review.

ARNOLD, CAROLINE *Easter Island: Giant Stone Statues Tell of a Rich and Tragic Past*; written and illus. with photographs by Caroline Arnold. Clarion, 2000 [48p]

ISBN 0-395-87609-5 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-8

Although the purpose of the moai that seem to stand sentinel around the famous island is obviously the intriguing mystery here, Arnold sets the stone figures into cultural perspective, examining what archaeologists, anthropologists, missionaries, explorers, and descendants of island settlers have discovered concerning the Polynesians who carved them. In a dozen succinct chapters she surveys the land and its original topography, discusses legends about the earliest settlers, reconstructs how the moai were carved, moved, and placed, and speculates on how deforestation, overfarming, overhunting, clan warfare, and European-borne disease contributed to the decline of the island civilization. Plenty of crisply reproduced color photographs will draw in the browsers, while a comprehensive index and concise chapter titles will help report writers navigate through the material with ease. EB

BATTLE-LAVERT, GWENDOLYN *The Shaking Bag*; illus. by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson. Whitman, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-8075-7328-0 \$15.95

R 5-8 yrs

Battle-Lavert fashions an original tale based on traditional motifs in descriptive, effective language: "One cold, blustery evening, five ravens landed on her clothesline. They were black as night. Like trapeze artists, they swayed back and forth on the line." Miss Annie Mae is a poor but generous woman who, despite her poverty, makes sure all those birds around her place get fed. One night a traveling man named Raven Reed knocks on Miss Annie's door, looking for food and a place to sleep. Miss Annie has little to share but offers it nonetheless, only to see Raven pull all they need from her empty seed bag with the magic words "Shake it up! Shake it up! All around!" That Raven is an emissary from the birds may be obvious, but the clarity of this tale, with its simple and obvious moral, is part of its translucent charm. Robinson's illustrative style has a William Johnson-like flow to the drafting of figures and a Goya-like verve to the vertical lines that energize the compositions. The paper itself is a pale goldenrod that adds emphasis to the palette, which consists mostly of intense shades of red, blue, and green. Several of the compositions are crowded and difficult to see; still, the paintings have a vigor that suits Battle-Lavert's storytelling voice. Any adult wanting to tell a lively, instructive tale should look in this direction. JMD

BELL, HILARI *Songs of Power*. Hyperion, 2000 [224p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2487-5 \$16.49

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0561-7 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-10

Imina, the protagonist of this action-packed futuristic novel, is one of a small group of children living with their scientist parents in an underwater habitat that serves as a base for researchers looking in the ocean for a solution to a world food crisis. Imina, however, is not a scientist but a teenaged shaman-in-training, whose studies with her Inuit grandmother were interrupted by the latter's death. She resents the technology-saturated atmosphere in which she lives, and she is in return called a "savage" by one peer and suspected by most adults of being mentally ill because of her belief in magic. Magic soon becomes dangerously real, however, when the habitat is threatened by a force emanating from the whales that make up the "council of Makers," whose deliberations the reader has been privy to since page one. As a magic-maker herself, Imina is the only one capable of reaching the whales, who believe that the above-grounders have betrayed their trust; she's therefore the habitat's only hope of survival. The cliché of the science/magic division is given no new life here, and the cultural practices of the sketchily developed characters are a new age hodgepodge of belief systems forced into thematic reconciliation within the novel. The novel's message is further complicated by a pattern of allusions to *Hamlet* and other classics of English literature. Still, whales and magic are popular elements and the themes here are appealing; readers who want to escape to a place where there is more in heaven and earth—and the ocean—than we have hitherto dreamed will enjoy this ecological fantasy. FK

BOWDISH, LYNEA *Brooklyn, Buggy, and Me*; illus. by Nancy Carpenter. Farrar, 2000 [96p]

ISBN 0-374-30993-0 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

Sam is nine when he and his widowed mother move from rural West Virginia to Brooklyn to live with his grandfather. Sam has a hard time adjusting to city life, and his difficulty is compounded by the fact that he feels his grandfather doesn't want him there. Longing for the familiar and realizing he isn't going to get it occupy a lot of Sam's time, but he slowly begins to learn his way around. More importantly, he comes to the realization that his grandfather (the Buggy of the title), a listener, not a talker, loves him and understands more than he lets on. In less capable hands this title would be indistinguishable from any number of "adjustment to change" books. Bowdish, however, has a slightly warped sense of humor (Sam's mom keeps Sam's dad's cremated remains in an urn that she talks to daily) and a knack for fully dimensional characterization that keeps the proceedings lively. Sam's voice suits his age, and his gradual unfolding to the pleasures of 1950s city life (stickball, stoop ball, Coney Island, egg creams) is unforced and reassuring. Final illustrations not seen. JMD

BROOKE, PEGGY *Jake's Orphan*. Kroupa/DK Ink, 2000 [272p]

ISBN 0-7894-2628-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-8

For orphan-a-philes who have sniffled with happiness through *Goodnight, Mr. Tom* and *Anne of Green Gables*, Brooke offers a richly satisfying tale of Tree, a twelve-

year-old whose dream of a home finally seems to be coming true. There's a price, though. He has had to leave his younger brother, Acorn, behind at the orphanage, since Delton Gunderson and his wife have no need for a second farm hand on their North Dakota spread. The dour, nigh-unpleasable Gunderson puts Tree through his paces, working him hard and long, but Tree flourishes at farm labor and hopes to be adopted at the end of his trial year. Acorn, as angry, impetuous, and conniving as Tree is steady, shows up at the farm and imperils everything Tree has worked for; the elder brother must decide whether fraternal ties are stronger than his dreams of a home. Then Delton Gunderson's bachelor brother, Jake, a man who knows a thing or two about being a younger sibling, shows the boys a way through their dilemma. Brooke brings Gunderson's 1926 farm vividly to life—unforgiving rounds of dairy chores, horrifying brushfires, neighborly cooperation, a dinner table groaning with daily feasts. Tree and Acorn are achingly believable in both their vulnerability and their inner strength, and readers will cheer as they take up permanent residence with the man determined to be their father. EB

BRUCHAC, JOSEPH *Sacajawea*. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2000 [240p]
ISBN 0-15-202234-1 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 8-12

In a dense narrative told in alternate chapters by Sacajawea and by William Clark, Bruchac recounts the bulk of the Lewis and Clark expedition, detailing the history of political and social relations between the explorers and the diverse American Indian groups they encounter. Sacajawea proves to be a leader in these contexts, endearing herself to the men of the expedition as a resourceful and resilient woman. While the character of Sacajawea emerges as an engaging and thoughtful heroine, the depiction of William Clark's character is eschewed in favor of long recountings of details of the voyage, which may cause less dedicated readers to lose enthusiasm. Also problematic are brief stories that appear at the opening of each chapter, which, in tandem with alternating narrative voices, may disorient and deter some readers. Once past these obstacles, however, this is an involving tale of struggle and survival. Bruchac emphasizes Sacajawea's grave difficulty in guiding this group of men into a land where they didn't know the languages or understand the peoples. A historical note at the end gives some examples of how closely Bruchac followed the journals of Lewis and Clark in retelling the story of this voyage, and a detailed map is included. The recently issued U.S. dollar coin featuring Sacajawea will likely ignite renewed interest in the adventures of this brave and unusual woman and her role in this complex tale of survival, history, and politics. KM

CALVERT, PATRICIA *Michael, Wait for Me*. Atheneum, 2000 [160p]
ISBN 0-689-82102-6 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Sarah's put out (literally—she's forced to relocate into another bedroom) when her older sister brings her fiancé home for the summer. Soon, though, Sarah joins the rest of the family in being smitten with Michael ("Michael was better than brave. He could joust and use a word like *ergo* too"), and she is intrigued by the revelation about his tragic past (he accidentally shot and killed his older brother). As Sarah's family grows fonder of Michael, however, Sarah's sister grows away from him, finding his dependence and sadness too difficult; her decision to dissolve the engagement leads to tragic consequences. Unfortunately, the story never

succeeds in provoking genuine emotion. Michael is too wistfully perfect to find any destiny but doom, and the other characters equally lack dimensionality, operating instead as functionaries to bring the drama to its inevitable end. Calvert has a nice line in portentous foreshadowing, however ("What I never guessed was how the whole family would be changed by the time September came"), and she also offers some astute implicit commentary on both the allure and the labor of being responsible for the happiness of another person. This might serve as a provocative counterbalance to dramas of emotional rescue such as Randle's *The Only Alien on the Planet* (BCCB 3/95). DS

CAREY, JANET *Molly's Fire*. Atheneum, 2000 [208p]

ISBN 0-689-82612-5 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

When Molly Fowler's father joins the Army Air Corps in World War II, he leaves his gold watch chain in her keeping as a promise that he will return. The dreaded telegram arrives informing the Fowlers that the lieutenant is missing in action and presumed dead, and in the months that follow the family struggles to come to terms with their loss—all except Molly, who remains stubbornly in denial. Her hope kindles when she sees a pocket watch identical to her father's in the possession of a German POW in a labor camp in her Maine town, and she sets forth on a mission to retrieve the watch and forestall her mother's romance with an ex-beau until her father returns from overseas. Carey delivers Molly's hoped-for happy ending, patterning her tale on accounts of pilots who "were fortunate enough to go into hiding and eventually escape with the help of the underground." It is not the improbability of the lieutenant's return, therefore, but the melodramatic entanglements of secondary characters that impair the novel's credibility—saintly friend Jane, who stoically bears insults concerning her illegitimacy and her Japanese-American parentage; Jane's melancholy grandmother, who has never accepted her own husband's death; Mrs. Fowler's love interest, Glen, the town bigot, whose wife left him because he couldn't forget his old flame; Glen's son, Sam, whose broken home has turned him into the town bully. Still, these soap-opera details wield undeniable appeal for many readers, who will welcome the climactic father-daughter reunion ("Her father's arms encircled her and held her tight. 'Daddy,' she cried into the buttonhole by her cheek") and happily reach for the tissues. EB

CARLE, ERIC *Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother, Too?*; written and illus. by Eric Carle. HarperCollins, 2000 [26p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028767-5 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028768-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 2-4 yrs

Carle's newest picture book, sporting his hallmark collages composed of varied color and patterns, takes a look at motherhood. The text hits the ground running, asking on the title page, "Does a kangaroo have a mother, too?" Carle answers the question on his opening page ("YES!/ A KANGAROO has a mother./ Just like me and you"), only to test again: "Does a lion have a mother, too?" Though preschoolers will enjoy the predictability of the call-and-response format and the gentle reassurance of the last page ("YES! YES! Of course they do./ Animal mothers love their babies, just as yours loves you"), Carle's lengthy repetitive text lacks the energy associated with other similarly formatted books such as Williams' *I Went*

Walking (BCCB 12/90) or even *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Terminology for each species' babies, parents, and groups is appended. EAB

CARMİ, DANIELLA *Samir and Yonatan*; tr. by Yael Lotan. Levine/Scholastic, 2000 [192p]

ISBN 0-439-13504-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

A bicycle accident lands Palestinian Samir in a "Jew hospital" awaiting surgery for a shattered kneecap. Intimidated by the four Jewish children on his ward and somewhat hampered by his limited grasp of Hebrew, Samir nonetheless begins to make some tenuous connections with his hospital mates whose problems, he discovers, are at least as grievous as his own. The manic Tzahi, who jumps on beds and raucously rules the room in disregard of regulations, reluctantly admits he needs a catheter; subdued Razia is recovering from a head injury from her drunken father; withdrawn Ludmilla refuses to eat. It is studious Yonatan, however, with his hand in a "device" and his head in the stars, who finally makes an overture to Samir and promises him that, after surgery, he will take him on a trip to Mars. The tedium and loneliness of Samir's hospital stay is convincingly portrayed; with time hanging heavy in his hands he dwells on his hunger, fear of the Israelis around him, and memories of his dead brother and his brokenhearted family, working himself into a fever that only delays his surgery further. All this is in service of Carmi's message of international brotherhood that, when it arrives, is forced and heavy-handed. Samir and Yonatan bond over a virtual trip to Mars on a hospital computer, Samir and Tzahi bond by urinating into a potted plant together, and the future has a rosy glow: "Yonatan and me, my friend from the Jewish hospital. We're improving a new world, free from troubles. Nothing looks impossible to us, now that we're together." Although political strides have been made in the six years between this novel's original publication and its English-language release, reconciliation unfortunately hasn't proven to be this easy. EB

CASELEY, JUDITH *Praying to A.L.* Greenwillow, 2000 [192p]

ISBN 0-688-15934-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

When her father dies after years of struggle against heart disease, Sierra is inconsolable not just at the loss but at the shutdown of her family. She's particularly devastated by the disengagement of her best friend, Eli, who found in Sierra's father a stability that his own father couldn't provide. The grief-stricken girl finds comfort in the figure of Abraham Lincoln, to whom she was introduced by her father and to whom she prays. Lincoln inspires Sierra to new courage in school, where she coaxes her class into a play about the president's life and tragic death, which brings her to accept her own recent tragedy. Caseley writes about the longing and ravages of grief with perceptive understanding ("She pressed her face deeper into the folds of his pillow, willing the cadence and pitch of his voice to come back from the dead, searching in vain for his ghost. 'Haunt me, Papa,' Sierra whispered. 'Please come back and haunt me'"). Her observations of the flailing family are telling, particularly in contrast to Sierra's memories of happy days in the lively household headed by her Jewish father and Cuban mother. The subplots detract from the main focus, however, and the Lincoln obsession (though somewhat better integrated than in Catherine Lewis' similarly themed *Postcards to Father Abraham*,

BCCB 2/00) never has the impact of Sierra's immediate drama. Still, the rawness of grief is memorably limned here, and Sierra's—and her family's—gradual recovery will give readers hope and reassurance. DS

CLARK, MARGARET *Care Factor Zero*. Avon Tempest, 2000 [192p]

Paper ed. ISBN 0-380-81390-4 \$6.99

Reviewed from galleys

NR Gr. 9-12

Fifteen-year-old Larceny Leyton's led a hard life, moving from foster home to foster home after her father's abandonment and her mother's suicide, but she might have gotten into more than even she can handle after she believes she's killed the fence to whom she sells her shoplifted goods. On the run, she encounters other down-and-out teens, a few people who try to help her, and a man whose offer of assistance is really his prelude to finding a use for her in his pornography and prostitution businesses; her biggest obstacle, however, is the uncontrollable rage that makes her lash out in violence. There's a slick simplification in this Australian import that may be appealing in its similarity to some comic-book narratives, but there are comics that deal better with the street-kid subject. The portrayal of Larceny is oddly romanticized and she's described in clichés (she's "very beautiful in a wild, untamed sort of way" with "her hips swinging suggestively in her tight 501s"), and the rest of the writing is similarly corny ("But though she ran and ran till her lungs felt as if they would burst, she couldn't run away from the one thing that terrified her the most: herself"). The plotting is random, Larceny's sudden bonding with a new-agey social worker who spouts John Bradshaw is unlikely, and the ending that leaves her in the clutches of the porn merchant but hopeful about escape is both logically and dramatically unsatisfying. Even readers who can't get enough of Shelley Stoeck's melodramas of slumming are going to wonder what to make of this. DS

CONLY, JANE LESLIE *What Happened on Planet Kid*. Holt, 1999 [160p]

ISBN 0-8050-6065-0 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Dawn's mother needs time to recuperate from surgery, so twelve-year-old Dawn is spending the summer of 1958 with her mother's beloved uncle and aunt on their rural Virginia farm. Though she misses her family, Dawn loves the farm and the companionship of the neighboring Williams clan, especially her age-mate Charlotte and Charlotte's crush-worthy older brother Rufus; also in the pack of summer friends is Delbert, "kin to Auntie Merle, at the colored camp." The summer escapades take on a darker tone as Dawn gradually realizes the violence Mr. Williams inflicts on his family, violence that drives one son from home and may yet kill Rufus. Conly brings deftly depicted and apparently random elements together, creating a vivid mosaic of a summer experience. Details range from Dawn's pitching gift to Delbert's insistence on being called a different name every few days to the establishment of Planet Kid, a secret hideout in a field of jimsonweed, and Dawn's present-tense narration has a believable naïveté as well as an effective sweep. Elements of the period subtly inform the narrative, especially in attitudes towards race (even Dawn's kindly Aunt Van serves "the colored boys lemonade from a separate dipper") and family business ("If he's a little tough on them," says Van of Mr. Williams, "I can see why"). While the conclusion's more open-ended than readers seeking a happy ending might wish, straightforward triumph would be

neither realistic nor typical of Conly's work, and the possibility of resolution is enough to satisfy. DS

COX, JUDY *Weird Stories from the Lonesome Café*; illus. by Diane Kidd. Browndeer/Harcourt, 2000 72p
ISBN 0-15-202134-5 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 3-5

Narrator Sam is living with Uncle Clem while his parents are away on business. Bound and determined to write a novel, Uncle Clem moves them both out to an isolated café in the middle of Nevada, but the café is surprisingly busy and Uncle Clem still can't find the time he needs to write. A "Help Wanted" sign on the door produces a number of strangers fleeing the attentions of a Channel 54 News team: Bigfoot (who becomes "Harry" the cook); Elvis (who becomes "El" and delivers bread in his pink Cadillac); Dorothy (from Oz, who becomes the café waitress); Santa Claus (who signs on as temporary handyman); and a little green alien (who washes dishes). Each tabloid personality arrives with Channel 54 hot on his or her trail, only to be rescued by the quick-thinking Sam, who finds jobs for all the newsworthy notables. This premise is mildly amusing the first time, but it runs out of gas fast, and Cox does little to refuel it. Kidd's black-and-white ink drawings have an insouciant cartoony charm in their clean lines and jolly interpretations of the exaggerated situations, and they help to make the incidents appear funnier than they are written. This is just barely enough to make a light reading snack for reluctant readers and youngsters who actually know who Elvis is and can appreciate the humor attached to the sightings of various celebrities. JMD

CREECH, SHARON *The Wanderer*; illus. by David Diaz. Cotler/HarperCollins, 2000 [320p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027731-9 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027730-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 5-8

Thirteen-year-old Sophie is thrilled with her summer adventure, sailing across the Atlantic on the *Wanderer*, "a forty-five-foot sailboat with a motley crew: three uncles and two cousins." Relations among Sophie's "boat family" are sometimes prickly, with Uncle Stew and his son Brian officiously worrying, Uncle Mo joining them to denigrate his lazy but charming son Cody, and everyone feeling a little awkward about Sophie. It's understandable that her position in the group is complicated, since her history is as well: the family to which she's so fiercely loyal became hers through adoption three years ago, and she shies away from discussion of her previous life. Her shipmates aren't sure of what to make of her multitude of stories about Bompie, the grandfather they're sailing to see and whom Sophie has never met—Sophie insists the stories are true, told to her by Bompie, but is this just part of her retroactively imagined family life, and if so, what will happen when she finally comes face to face with the old man? Interspersing Sophie's narration with excerpts from Cody's log, Creech concocts an effective atmosphere filled with promise and possibility, yet tinged with shadows of past grief. She doesn't overdo the sea-changes, but it's clear that everyone, not just Sophie, is grappling with the implications of their past and wondering about their futures. Sophie's past watery tragedy is rather romantic, but in general the author employs these classic motifs well; Sophie's physical and emotional passages are depicted with tenderness and strength (her meeting with Bompie is unforcedly and superbly touching). Diaz'

woodcuts are just right for adding both geography (maps of various parts of the voyage are helpful) and decoration, with headpieces opening each brief chapter. Sophie is a quietly luminous heroine, and readers will rejoice in her voyage. DS

CROWE, CAROLE *Waiting for Dolphins*. Boyds Mills, 2000 139p
ISBN 1-56397-847-4 \$14.95 M Gr. 6-9

Molly's father died in a sailing accident, and in a fury of grief Molly shuts out her mother, who is determined to sell the family sailboat, *Emerald Eyes*. Blinded by her rage to dangerous realities, Molly resolves to be true to her father's memory by stealing the sailboat and sailing to Tahiti. The arrival of drug smugglers, old family friends, and a world-class hurricane complicate an already risky enterprise and give Crowe a chance to end her story with a bang. Unfortunately, most of the action in this book happens in the final pages; the majority of the novel consists of Molly plotting to steal the boat and antagonizing her long-suffering mother. The language is cliché-ridden and sentimental, and Molly is, despite her emotional confusion and sense of loss, an unsympathetic and whiny character, acting much younger than the fifteen-going-on-sixteen she is supposed to be. The salt sea and sailing ships retain their magic, however, and undemanding adventure lovers may set anchor here. JMD

DANZIGER, PAULA *Snail Mail No More*; by Paula Danziger and Ann M. Martin. Scholastic, 2000 [336p]
ISBN 0-439-06335-3 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-8

This sequel starts up where the previous book left off, with the promise of a face-to-face visit for former classmates/present penpals Tara*Starr and Elizabeth (written respectively by Ann Martin and Paula Danziger) after the remarkably tumultuous seventh-grade year chronicled in *P.S. Longer Letter Later*. Readers who missed the first book get lots of catch-up explanations about the girls' domestic and romantic situations in the lengthy, detailed emails that Eliz812 & TSTARR exchange during and after that visit. Fans anxious for resolutions to conflicts and problems introduced in the last book get them with a vengeance: most dramatically, Elizabeth's downsized father—the one who deserted the family in the last book—dies in a one-car drunk driving accident and Tara's mother gives birth. There's also some kissing and drinking, but nothing parents or kids will find too edgy (after Tara's first drinks, she takes the pledge). In fact, the book sounds like it was proofread by OSHA: no opportunity is missed for imparting solid information (about Alateen, skin cancer, cat safety), for recommending literary classics (from *Frog and Toad* to Langston Hughes' poetry), and for raising social awareness (the insufficiency of government funding for daycare is a recurring theme). Pre-YA readers looking for a soap opera with a safety net will find this a satisfying answer to the question of what happened next to this pair of attractive opposites. FK

ELGAR, SUSAN *The Brothers Gruesome*; illus. by Drahos Zak. Lorraine/Houghton, 2000 32p
ISBN 0-618-00515-3 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 2-4

The three Brothers Gruesome are disgusting ogres who've eaten everything they could get their hands on, including their own mother, since the day they were born. Their eating continues as the landscape around them grows more barren,

until they are chomped by a monster bigger than they are. The plot is slight, but the illustrations are elegantly grotesque, featuring the three slovenly and wart-ridden brothers and their rapidly munching mouths. Framed in delicate rectangles of black, Zak's pen-and-ink illustrations depict finely textured figures and landscapes in a muted palate of browns and grays, looking stark and desolate against crisp white backgrounds. Spot art picks up vile details from the larger illustrations, such as a dead bug with legs in the air or the carefully arranged bones of a recent meal. Unfortunately, the rhyming couplets that constitute the text are rhythmically inconsistent, and the story begins slowly before arriving at the eating action that will engage children. Nevertheless, kids who are yearning for a beginning scary book with a good dose of gross may be drawn in by the Brothers Gruesome and their gratifyingly loathsome eating habits. KM

ERNST, LISA CAMPBELL *Bear's Day*; written and illus. by Lisa Campbell Ernst. Viking, 2000 12p
ISBN 0-670-89115-0 \$5.99 Ad 1-3 yrs

Cat's Play; written and illus. by Lisa Campbell Ernst. Viking, 2000 12p
ISBN 0-670-89116-9 \$5.99 R 1-3 yrs

Ernst's new board books display her familiar gentle pastel watercolors with rounded shapes, combining them with compact rhyming couplets for some cozy beginning book experience. *Cat's Play*, in which a baby interacts with a favorite pet, is the more successful, because the rhymes are more exact ("Hello, cat / Gentle pat . . . Peek-a-boos/ Silly shoes") and the spreads less randomly connected. The rhyme in *Bear's Day*, in which a child plays with a toy bear, is not as polished and the progress is slightly more arbitrary. Either volume would be suitable for tiny hands (and teeth), however, while the joyful play and child-centered illustrations are reminiscent of board books by Helen Oxenbury and Shirley Hughes. EAB

FLEISCHMAN, PAUL *Big Talk: Poems for Four Voices*; illus. by Beppe Giacobbe. Candlewick, 2000 [45p]
ISBN 0-7636-0636-7 \$14.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Fleischman is the king of choral poetry for young people, and here he takes a bold new approach, orchestrating three fairly substantial poems for a quartet of readers (though suggestions are included for workability with fewer or more as well). The layout bears a resemblance to musical staves, with each voice being assigned a color that backgrounds the text that reader speaks; once readers get the hang of moving down to the next staff rather than turning the page at the end of the line, execution will be a breeze. The first two poems ("The Quiet Evenings Here" and "Seventh-Grade Soap Opera") aren't particularly noteworthy in their own right, dragging things out a bit and relying on the arrangement rather than original language to bring interest to the words. "Ghosts' Grace," however, is evocative and memorable, playing with sounds and alliteration ("To bite into summer itself, sweet as sugar") as it gives voice to ghosts who watch in envy as the living engage in the pleasurable ritual of a meal. Throughout, the use of the vocal parts is clever and effective, and the poems will make their own rhythms as parts shift from solo to group, unison to near-fugue effects (there's a particularly nice touch in "Seventh-Grade Soap Opera" when the full chorus chimes in on the names of the gossipees). The visuals are unfortunately uneven, adding some loud complexity to the already

dense pages (the opening spreads are particularly overbusy) and running to some screechy and dissonant hues, especially in the strips of images that underscore the texts. Still, the sheer pleasure of using this in class is undeniable, and once kids have mastered this they might get a kick out of orchestrating their own favorite poems. DS

FOGELIN, ADRIAN *Crossing Jordan*. Peachtree, 2000 [160p]

ISBN 1-56145-215-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

When the house next door is sold to an African-American family, Cass's father immediately puts up a tall fence between the two yards. Cass makes friends with neighbor Jemmie despite the fence; both girls are avid runners, and they meet at the school track every morning to run. Their secret friendship is exposed when Cass's father comes home from work unexpectedly, and he forbids Cass to see any more of Jemmie or her family. Fogelin does an effective job of portraying anger on both sides of the fence, with Jemmie's mother forbidding Jemmie from associating with bigots just as fervently as Cass's father forbids Cass from associating with black people. Although there is eventual reconciliation between the two families, Cass's father does not entirely renounce his former bigotry; instead, he struggles with his reservations about their friendship. Fogelin creates Cass and Jemmie as complex characters with the same differences of approach and personality that mark the interactions of other best friends, whatever their skin color. Cass' straightforward voice never falters, even when she questions her father's beliefs and her own decisions. Readers will appreciate the honesty of Fogelin's approach and applaud the two girls in their fast friendship. KM

FRADIN, DENNIS BRINDELL *Ida B. Wells: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement*; written by Dennis Brindell Fradin and Judith Bloom Fradin. Clarion, 2000 [178p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-395-89898-6 \$18.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 5-12

Celebrated as the "Queen of the Black Race" and "The Princess of the Press," Ida B. Wells is best known for her turn-of-the-century anti-lynching crusade. Her biting editorials and inspired speeches against vigilantism inflamed Southern readers, brought public attention to a "crime against humanity," and rallied supporters. Ahead of her time in her aggressively nonconciliatory approach, she was also spurned by less militant African-American leaders of her day and avoided as a troublemaker. The Fradins recount Wells' fight for racial equality, her encounters with the day's personalities (Frederick Douglass confessed that "while he disapproved of lynching . . . he had assumed that the victims were guilty and weren't worth the time and effort of saving") and her extraordinary accomplishments: civil rights activist, journalist, editor, founding member of the NAACP, suffragist, political candidate, Chicago's first female probations officer, and still more. Quotes from contemporaries, excerpts from letters, grim photographs of lynchings, and Wells' own words take readers beyond simple biography and set Wells squarely in her time. The portrait is well rounded, showing that the fearless and uncompromising activist was also an overbearing mother and a blunt and undiplomatic individual ("I cannot or do not make friends. . . . My temper has always been my besetting sin"). Clearly captioned black and white illustrations, historical docu-

ments, and facsimiles are generously interspersed, and students will welcome the insightful author's note, useful bibliography, and extensive index. JNH

FREEMAN, MARTHA *The Trouble with Cats*; illus. by Cat Bowman Smith. Holiday House, 2000 [80p]

ISBN 0-8234-1479-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-4

Third-grader Holly is trying to adjust to her mother's remarriage, a new stepfather, his tiny apartment, his four cats ("William has four cats. And every one of them is trouble"), and a new school. She perseveres and, eventually, proves victorious over the small yet daunting obstacles to primary-grade happiness. It's clear that Holly's troubles are more a question of perspective than tragedy (her first-person narrative is cheerily pessimistic), and her slight emotional twitching to find a comfortable fit in this new situation will elicit more rueful grins than belly laughs. Bowman contributes pen-and-ink drawings with lines that quiver with energy, and the spot art of the grinning cat that opens each chapter perks up the proceedings. Freeman has a knack for wholesome, undemanding fiction (*The Year My Parents Ruined My Life*, BCCB 2/98) with enough action and humor to carry the plot. Brief chapters and a chatty, casual writing style makes this title a good choice for pleasure-or-practice reading for emerging bibliophiles. JMD

GARDELLA, TRICIA *Blackberry Booties*; illus. by Glo Coalson. Orchard, 2000 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33184-9 \$16.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30184-2 \$15.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

In this old-fashioned and idyllic country story, a girl named Mikki Jo is searching for a gift for her new baby cousin, Samuel. While delivering some fresh picked blackberries, she hears the buzzing of sheep shears, and she's inspired to exchange a bucket of blackberries for several handfuls of wool. Mikki Jo overhears other neighbors who are carding wool, spinning thread, and knitting, and she exchanges a bucket of blackberries for their help at each step in the making of the baby's present, a pair of baby booties. Loose watercolors convey the motion of Mikki Jo's restlessness en route to the completion of Samuel's gift, and Coalson uses a soft palette of blackberry-stain purples and countryside greens and browns to depict the bucolic environs. Unfortunately, human faces and hands are awkwardly drafted, facial expressions are generically cheery, and the cumulative series of coincidences that solves Mikki Jo's problems robs the story of tension. While young readers may overlook these shortcomings in favor of the berry picking refrain of "one, two, three in the bucket, one in the mouth," libraries may want to consider purchasing another copy of *Blueberries for Sal* instead. KM

GEORGE, JEAN CRAIGHEAD *How to Talk to Your Cat*; illus. by Paul Meisel and with photographs. HarperCollins, 2000 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027969-9 \$9.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027968-0 \$9.95

R Gr. 2-5

Obviously a felinophile, George clearly enjoys this disquisition on cat communication, which touches on history and behavior as well as vocalization. She examines cat greetings ("Among cats, 'Hello' is rubbing heads") and the various flavors

of "Meow" (in a double-spread glossary), the purr and the positions of whiskers and tails, the pretend mouse and the paper-bag cave, with attention to concrete detail that will have youngsters poring over the book with one eye on their own kitties. While George streamlines things a bit (it's never mentioned, for instance, that pleasure is not the only motivation for a purr) and inclines towards a romanticism that doesn't always go with her behavioral assessments, the book is effective at nudging readers from their anthropocentric worldviews to a cat's-eye approach to life (the notion of the cat's map of the house and neighborhood is particularly piquant). Meisel's illustrations are a light-handed line-and-watercolor, with tail-twitching cats pared down but expressive. In an intriguing move, the book pairs the watercolor cats with a photographed human (George herself, to be exact) for diagrams of human-cat interaction; the result is surprisingly successful, offering along with its visual pleasures the implication of two different ways of seeing as well as two different ways of being seen. With its mixture of animal behavior and cuddliness, this will set young cat lovers purring. DS

GEORGE, JEAN CRAIGHEAD *How to Talk to Your Dog*; illus. by Sue Truesdell and with photographs. HarperCollins, 2000 [34p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027093-4 \$9.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027092-6 \$9.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-5

In this companion volume to the above title, George turns her lens on the canine world. Those familiar with the animal-behavior aspect of George's *Julie of the Wolves* won't be surprised to see her detailed examination as the author explains vocalizations, tail positions, scent and sniffing, facial expressions, and various other aspects of doggy socializing. In this book too, some of the statements are a bit misleading (not all dogs strive for dominance, for instance), but the author is clear about the hierarchical nature of dogs and the impact of human leadership ("Telling your dog he is good is his reward for living"). The mixed photography (of George, representing the humans) and illustration (an endearingly scruffy yellow mutt is the main canine representative) is again effective. Truesdell's got a gift for casually cockeyed canines: there's a Feifferesque touch to her scrawled lines, and her panoply of pooches are expressive in the extreme with their motion lines and flying ears (the collection on the endpapers will send dogophiles into sighs of yearning). As with George's cat volume, this will be an accessible and perhaps paradigm-shifting introduction for young readers. DS

GIBBONS, GAIL *My Baseball Book*; written and illus. by Gail Gibbons. HarperCollins, 2000 [24p]
ISBN 0-688-17137-0 \$5.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-7 yrs

My Soccer Book; written and illus. by Gail Gibbons. HarperCollins, 2000 [24p]
ISBN 0-688-17138-9 \$5.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

This pair of inviting titles, trim sized for small hands to thumb or to tuck into a backpack for reference at a game, offer an overview of fundamental rules and basic plays. Clean diagrams of playing fields and positions set the scene, while a uniformed (no sandlot games, these), multicultural kid cast exudes joyful intensity as

they zoom across the field and dart around bases, visually demonstrating the plays. Gibbons takes a cookie-cutter approach to her texts, though, squeezing unequal amounts of information between her identical openings (each sport “is fun, whether you are playing yourself or rooting for your favorite team”) and closings (“Everyone cheers. It’s been such a good game”). The format works well for the more straightforward soccer rules; players even get a break at halftime. The greater complexity of baseball rules, however, tugs at the seams of this constrained format, and Gibbons simply cannot cover the contingencies young spectators are likely to see on the field at a typical game. Some effort is made to clarify terms in the appended glossary, but even such basics as “strike zone” and “grand slam” are mentioned or demonstrated in text and action but left undefined. Still, adult readers will probably be more than willing to fill in the blanks, and listeners will appreciate an author who takes their interest in the game seriously. EB

GIBLIN, JAMES CROSS, ed. *The Century That Was: Reflections on the Last One Hundred Years*. Atheneum, 2000 [176p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-82281-2 \$19.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-10

Although students are regularly expected to write essays, remarkably few essays are written for children to read; in this anthology, eleven distinguished children’s and young adult authors embark on, if not uncharted, certainly unfrequented waters, and their voyage through the century is far from smooth. Many entries are intended to instruct, and of these Albert Marrin’s finely crafted exploration of the legacies of World War I is by far the strongest. Penny Colman, Walter Dean Myers, and Laurence Pringle offer cursory overviews of the century’s events in their specialties—women’s rights, civil rights, and conservation movements. Russell Freedman and Jim Murphy respectively expound on the futurism of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells (heavy on Verne, light on Wells) and the development of the automobile and commercial airline industries; Milton Meltzer offers disjointed observations on federal politics. Other essays take on a more personal tone: Bruce Brooks’ razor-sharp indictment of the “early breeding phenomenon” (raising small children to be pros) in late twentieth-century sports is bound to raise howls of protest or approbation among teen readers; Lois Lowry’s intimate (and very funny) reflections on the photographic images of six generations of women in her family should send readers scurrying for their scrapbooks. Katherine Paterson contributes an earnest but rambling comparison of her views on Christian faith and service with those of her minister father, and Eve Bunting tries unsuccessfully to integrate her personal immigration experience with a whirlwind mini-history of American immigration experience in toto. Although this composite volume is maddeningly uneven, Marrin’s, Brooks’, and Lowry’s entries suggest how powerful and entertaining essays for children can be; hopefully other efforts will follow. EB

HARJO, JOY *The Good Luck Cat*; illus. by Paul Lee. Harcourt, 2000 [32p]
ISBN 0-15-232197-7 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

In poet Joy Harjo’s first children’s book, a young American Indian girl chronicles the nine near-death experiences (“lives”) of her good luck cat, Woogie, “a striped cat with tickling whiskers and green electric eyes.” Each well-paced double-page

spread tells a distinct tale about the perils Woogie has survived: from the time she was found by the narrator's mother "spinning and yowling in the dryer," to the time the narrator herself hid Woogie in the trunk so she could come along to the powwow—and then forgot about her—to the time her dad "watched Woogie's seventh life fly by him as she ran after it," chased by the boys who had shot her in the ear with a BB gun. The engaging illustrations play bold blocks of muted acrylics against figures artfully framed in milky white, making the pictures easy to share with a group. Woogie herself is clearly the central character, a "stripedy" study in charcoal and shadowy taupes and tans seen through loving eyes, and an equally clear picture of her extended human family emerges naturally from her story. Like its subject, this book looks to have more than nine lives. FK

HEISEL, SHARON E. *Precious Gold, Precious Jade*. Holiday House, 2000 [208p] ISBN 0-8234-1432-9 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Although Chinese miners have resided in their own well-established corner of Bounty for some time, fourteen-year-old Angelena Stuart has had little contact with the "Celestials" until a Chinese widow enrolls her daughter An Li (dubbed Leeana by the teacher) in the one-room schoolhouse, and Angelena is surprised to discover just how much she likes the new girl. The Stuart family is soon at odds with their neighbors for allowing Angelena to socialize with Leeana, and as the town erupts into anti-Chinese violence, they are forced to define just how far neighborliness should extend to people whose traditions are so foreign from their own. Heisel presents a credible range of attitudes among the Bounty townsfolk: Angelena's Uncle Jasper takes sadistic delight in taunting Chinese miners at their claims with reckless gunshots and leads the gang that finally burns out the Chinese village; brother Tom agrees with forced removal but will not turn his own hand to violence. Even Angelena's parents, easily the most broad-minded and compassionate of Bounty's citizens, draw the line at allowing Eastern notions of polytheism to "corrupt" their children: "We build our lives on faith, family, and farm. . . . The townsfolk don't take kindly to your keeping company with a Celestial and we have to pay some attention to that, too. Miners can move on, but farmers have to live in a community." Angelena's voice, plainspoken and passionate, whips the action along, and readers not quite ready to tackle Yep's *Dragon's Gate* (BCCB 12/93) should find this a riveting introduction to a sad chapter in Oregon history. EB

HERRERA, JUAN FELIPE *The Upside Down Boy*/El niño de cabeza; illus. by Elizabeth Gómez. Children's Book Press, 2000 32p ISBN 0-89239-162-6 \$15.95

R 6-9 yrs

This exuberant bilingual picture book chronicles Juanito's experience of finding his feet in a new place and his voice in a new language. In a brief introductory note, Herrera (author of *Calling the Doves*, BCCB 12/95) explains that when he was eight years old, his mother decided it was time for the family to give up their nomadic life as *campesinos* (field workers) and settle down in the city so he could go to school. Juanito's understandable anxieties at this move are poignant and poetic; since he does not yet speak English, he especially worries about the language gap and wonders, "Will my tongue turn into a rock?" The sometimes surreal acrylic illustrations successfully convey Juanito's nervous excitement as well as

the disorientation he expresses when he later describes himself (after mistakenly eating his lunch during recess time) as “the upside down boy.” In time, however, Juanito rights himself, thanks to his parents’ appreciation of both their native Spanish and their acquired English and thanks to Juanito’s young teacher, who praises his first poem and his singing voice. A happy ending that reads the same in both English and Spanish (“Uno . . . dos . . . and three!”) allows readers and listeners focusing on the language of either or both versions of the story to appreciate this celebration of shared languages and individual voices. FK

HIÇYILMAZ, GAYE *Smiling for Strangers*. Farrar, 2000 [160p]
ISBN 0-374-37081-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

As Nina’s grandfather lies mortally wounded, betrayed by a relative, he urges her to escape from their war-torn Yugoslavian homeland and head toward the only place that might secure her safety, England. Armed with little more than a letter and a mysterious pair of aged airline tickets that once belonged to her mother, Nina stows away in an aid convoy in hopes of finding Paul Fellows, the man who wrote to her mother long ago and seemed to promise refuge. Her lies regarding name and age (she adopts the identity of her deceased older cousin) mire her deeper in trouble as an unbalanced aid worker from the convoy holds her temporarily in a kind of eerie possessiveness, and a trip across England finally finds her hungry, weary, and exhausted at Fellows’ secluded home. There some longstanding family mysteries are revealed, and Nina begins to hope for some stability in her life. The political machinations behind the family drama are largely unclear, and even Nina’s perilous trek westward lacks the edge-of-the-seat immediacy of other refugee dramas (e.g., Watkins’ *So Far From the Bamboo Grove*, BCCB 6/86 or Temple’s *Grab Hands and Run*, 4/93). Still, this is a reasonably engrossing glimpse behind the headlines of Balkan turmoil, and Nina’s plight should keep the pages steadily turning. EB

HOUBLER, DOROTHY *Vanity Rules: A History of American Fashion and Beauty*; by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler. Twenty-First Century, 2000 160p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7613-1258-7 \$25.90

R Gr. 6-10

Primping and preening seems to have been a national pastime since the Pilgrims first wiped their boots on Plymouth Rock; here the Hooblers venture well beyond examination of modish apparel to discern Americans’ pursuit of the so, so malleable ideal of beauty. A dozen text-heavy but briskly readable chapters review the history of American costume and also the vast array of related beauty industries (hair dressing, body building, modeling, plastic surgery), inventions (standard clothing sizes, safety razors, Kotex, nylon stockings), and influences (movie stars, rock stars, pinup girls, political correctness, and anything French) that Americans considered essential to lookin’ good. Nor do the Hooblers consider this an exclusive concern of upper-class white women; men’s equally ego-driven trips to the hair powderer, haberdasher, and gym are brought to glaring light, and minorities’ quest for loveliness is clearly shown to predate Madam C. J. Walker. Although readers might pine for more illustrations, period photos and reproductions of engravings and advertisements are well-selected; boxed inserts on fashion oddities ranging from a cross-dressing colonial governor to the “King Tut” craze of the 1920s should

prove effective hooks for luring browsers into the text. Source notes and an index are included. EB

JONES, JENNIFER B. *Dear Mrs. Ryan, You're Ruining My Life*. Walker, 2000 [132p]

ISBN 0-8027-8728-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-6

Harvey's mom, the eponymous Mrs. Ryan, writes books for kids his age, and every year she comes to talk to his class about them. The problem is that through her books and these class visits Harvey's mom ends up sharing his personal life with "the whole world." It does seem that "somebody who knows how to make other kids laugh should know what makes their own kid sad," as Harvey complains, but since Mom doesn't seem to get it, he decides to try to distract her so she'll stop writing about him. The plot he and his best friend Seal concoct (it's her idea really) is to introduce Mrs. Ryan, a divorcee, to Mr. Fisher, the widowed principal. This plot—actually the whole book—hurtles towards a romantic conclusion in spite of Harvey's second thoughts and halfhearted attempts to derail it. By the end, however, he's reconciled to the new state of things, telling Seal, "I don't think there's a whole lot we can do to change other people. All we can do is work on ourselves. You know, make our own lives be the best they can be." This too-overt message seems contradicted by Harvey's eventual success in getting his mother to see why he resents being fictionalized for the amusement of his friends (which he accomplishes by making her a character in his submission to a school writing contest for which she is a judge). In spite of shallow character development (Harvey and his friend do little but play baseball and work on their stamp collections), this is a fast-paced and accessible read for kids not quite ready for the sophistication of *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. FK

KARR, KATHLEEN *Skullduggery*. Hyperion, 2000 [160p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2439-5 \$15.49

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0506-4 \$14.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

At first it's hard to say whether signing on as phrenologist Asa B. Cornwall's assistant is the best or worst thing that could happen to Matthew Morrissey. On the up side, the orphan now has a warm shelter, adequate food, an amiable guardian, and the opportunity to learn the science. On the down side, he is expected to rob graves to procure specimens for Dr. Cornwall's research. Cornwall's genuine dedication to his vocation rubs off on Matthew, who soon demonstrates the business acumen his employer lacks. As the skull-reading trade booms, Cornwall gathers the funds to complete his magnum opus, which requires study of specific skulls of the rich and famous. Cornwall and Matthew bag the likes of statesman-gone-wrong Aaron Burr and financier Nicholas Mordecai, but before they can scoop up Voltaire (the tomb's empty and they have to settle for second rate in Rousseau), they find themselves pursued by a nefarious grave robber with decidedly lower standards than their own scientific interests. Karr concocts some genuine chemistry between Matthew and Cornwall, and the goofier aspects of their whirlwind phrenological spree are tempered with some thoughtful considerations of the ethics of research on human remains. Conscience never gets in the way of the fun,

though, and readers digging for an adventure as droll as it is riveting will hit pay dirt here. EB

KERR, M. E. *What Became of Her*. HarperCollins, 2000 [192p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028436-6 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028435-8 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Serenity is a small town that's seen events some residents might like to forget—but other residents are determined they have to remember. E.C. comes face to face with this dilemma when he becomes friends with Julie Slaymaster, niece of Rosalind Slaymaster, powerful resident of the mansion on the hill. In her youth in Serenity Rosalind was the despised and tormented outsider, and now she's causing resentment by using her financial power to have a local park redeveloped and renamed for her late father. E.C. and Julie are actually two parts of a trio completed by daring and light-fingered Neal Kraft; Neal's uncle was Rosalind's chief tormentor, and Neal's father, himself a recent suicide, the object of Rosalind's misplaced affection. The looming trouble comes to a head when it's discovered that Neal has pocketed some valuable items from Mrs. Slaymaster's estate and E.C., in an effort to keep Mrs. Slaymaster from taking Julie and leaving town, kidnaps her beloved talisman, Peale, a leather doll she treats as human. This is a complex multigenerational plot, slowed down by the interpolation of Rosalind's diary and attenuated further by some odd bits of framework that suggest E.C. is an author telling this story retrospectively in an interview. While elements are compelling (particularly Mrs. Slaymaster's obsession with the inanimate but magnetic Peale) and the character dynamics absorbing (there's a pleasure in fitting names from Rosalind's youthful diary to contemporary adults), there are just too many threads here for a satisfactory payoff. Kerr fans will still appreciate her deft portrayals of the intricate small-town social structure and the what-might-have-been questions that drive us all. DS

KIMMEL, ELIZABETH CODY *Visiting Miss Caples*. Dial, 2000 [176p]

ISBN 0-8037-2502-7 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Jenna and her best friend, Liv, are looking forward to eighth grade, when, according to Liv, they can "take control," though as Jen notes "Liv had been in control all our lives." As Liv tries to involve Jenna in her increasingly malicious schemes (most of them aimed at tormenting an animal-rights activist classmate protesting frog vivisection), Jenna is able to break away, thanks to Miss Caples, the senior citizen she has been visiting as a human services class project ("fossil-sitting," in Liv's words). Supposed to read to Miss Caples, Jenna instead begins using her as a sounding board, telling her own story and eventually hearing Miss Caples' confession of the sins she herself committed in the service of friendship. Characters and plots from the past and the present intersect against a background of contemporary family problems (Liv's father declares bankruptcy and Jenna's dad leaves her mother) that serve as catalysts for change and, for some characters, growth. Though the plot flirts with melodrama and offers a full complement of coincidences, this juxtaposition of old and new stories is central to a fuller exploration of the novel's themes and may even lead readers to realize along with Jen that "life existed before I came along." FK

LICHTENHELD, TOM *Everything I Know about Pirates: A Collection of Made-up Facts, Educated Guesses, and Silly Pictures about Bad Guys of the High Seas*; written and illus. by Tom Lichtenheld. Simon, 2000 34p
ISBN 0-689-82625-7 \$16.00 R Gr. 3-6

Not wanting to deceive his readers about his expertise, Lichtenheld comes clean in his first sentence—"I don't know much about pirates, but I know enough to draw some pictures. And I can make up enough to draw some more pictures"—thus setting the stage for the comic commentary that follows. Lichtenheld has something to say about every aspect of a pirate's life: clothes ("The head pirate . . . gets to wear a really poofy white shirt with baggy sleeves that look cool during sword fights"), personal hygiene ("Pirates are also careful to stay good and stinky. They eat lots of garlic and never take baths"), and vernacular vocabulary ("Avast, ye vermin!" and "Swab the deck yourself, Larry!"). Invaluable information on the true history of the skull and crossbones (mistakenly believed to have been "discovered by pirates on the inside of a desk in a seventh-grade classroom in DeKalb, Illinois"), the importance of having "a decent, nasty pirate name" ("handy chart" provided), and an Official Pirate Glossary contribute to the maritime mayhem. Lichtenheld's humor goes beyond his text to take up residence in his mixed-media cartoons ("ink, colored pencil, gouache, pastels, and ear wax"), where captions and labeling act as punchlines for these sea-silly jokes, mad buccaneers, and piratical accoutrements. JMD

LOYD, DAVID *Polly Molly Woof Woof: A Book About Being Happy*; illus. by Charlotte Hard. Candlewick, 2000 [32p]
ISBN 0-7636-0755-X \$13.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad 3-5 yrs

Lloyd introduces this book as "as much a game as a story," and throughout the story of Polly taking her dog Molly to the park, asides to listeners invite them to join in the play by barking, sniffing, and scratching along. The text appears in three different sizes: small font for the play-along instructions, medium font for the story itself, and a variably sized gray font that transcribes onomatopoeic doggie sounds. The story is slight: Polly and Molly meet dogs of various shapes and sizes in the park, where they bark, sniff, and scratch together until everybody goes home happy. Unfortunately, the instructional text slows the pace; just as the cumulative dog barking is gaining momentum, the play-along instructions abandon the story in favor of a daunting double-page spread of text, proffering commentary on the happiness of barking. Hard illustrates a charming array of friendly canine visages yelping amidst cheery yellow, orange, and turquoise backgrounds that welcome readers to this walk in the park, although small boxed illustrations of dog faces make the book less useful for large audiences than it might be. When used as a group activity, this book will have puppy program participants pouncing, but when read straight through, it's barking up the wrong tree. KM

LONDON, JONATHAN *Snuggle Wuggle*; illus. by Michael Rex. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2000 [32p]
ISBN 0-15-202159-0 \$13.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad 1-3 yrs

This friendly text asks how various mother animals hug their children and answers with a rhyming response ("How does a bunny hug? Snuggle wuggle, snuggle

wuggle./ How does a chick hug? Fluffy duffy, fluffy duffy"). The narrative then slows to a double-page spread recapping all of the various methods of hugging, concluding with a final question ("How do you hug?") and revealing that the story's animals were the stuffed inhabitants of a child's bed. Overly formulaic, the let's-everybody-hug sequence stops the narrative's flow, and readers-aloud will be tempted to skip over this section to move hastily to the predictable ending. (Nor is there any rhyme or reason for fawns to hug "lazy daisy" or for koalas to "cuddle duddle," and the rhyme scheme breaks down in several places.) Young listeners will nonetheless enjoy the language play; they'll also warm to the cheerful illustrations featuring simple pictures of the various baby-mother pairings, in which shades of brown predominate, occasionally accented by blue water or green leaves. Though the content is thin, the book retains some sentimental appeal; it'll make good filler for that upcoming animal storytime. JNH

MCGILL, ALICE *Miles' Song*. Houghton, 2000 [224p]

ISBN 0-395-97938-2 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Twelve-year-old Miles is an enslaved house servant on the South Carolina plantation of Gency Tillery in 1851. His accidental glance at a book in the master's study has led to his being sent to "the breakin' ground" so his spirit can be broken and he can return to the plantation with the proper attitude. While at the breakers, Miles meets Elijah, an educated slave who teaches him how to read, dissemble, and survive; Elijah promises to contact Miles when the time comes to escape to freedom. Through Miles' eyes the reader sees the daily life of the enslaved, the hardships and despair, the determination and resilience that made it possible for individuals such as Miles to survive and escape. The loyalty and sense of community among Miles and his fellow slaves permeates the action, and McGill stays with the point of view of the young man who desires freedom above all else. The occasional clumsy transition mars the flow of the text, but strong characterizations and a driving sense of action carry the plot; dialect, when used, is easily understood. The novel reads like a suspense thriller, with spies, counterspies, disguises, and trickery used as weapons on both sides as Miles battles the belief that it is his destiny to be a slave. JMD

MCGRORY, ANIK *Mouton's Impossible Dream*; written and illus. by Anik

McGrory. Gulliver/Harcourt, 2000 [32p]

ISBN 0-15-202195-7 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Mouton is a sheep with a yen to fly—an accomplishment which her barnyard friends Canard the duck and Cocorico the rooster warn her is quite beyond her reach. By studying the diagrams in the workshop of "the Brothers," though, she hopes to learn the secret. Although autonomous flight will ever elude her, Mouton and her friends unexpectedly find themselves airborne in a basket beneath a hot air balloon—the first living creatures to make such a flight. McGrory's closing note assures the listeners, "This story is not far from the truth." Indeed, the Montgolfier brothers (coyly but pointlessly left unnamed throughout the text) did send a sheep, duck, and cockerel into the blue on an early trial run. Unfortunately, McGrory saves most of this fascinating truth for the note and fills her tale with the anthropomorphized antics of Mouton and company, implying that the

animals' ascent was a hasty diversion by the Montgolfiers, who were embarrassed to find their livestock had followed them to Versailles. Watercolor scenes of skeptical Parisians and the portly Mouton's dreams of free floating in the ether do, however, have their charms, and this may whet audience interest to take a peek at Alexandra Wallner's *The First Air Voyage in the United States* (BCCB 5/96). EB

McKINLEY, ROBIN *Spindle's End*. Putnam, 2000 [432p]

ISBN 0-399-23466-7 \$19.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7 up

Almost-fairy Katriona is chosen to represent her village at the christening of the long-awaited heir to the throne, the Princess Casta Albinia Allegra Dove Minerva Fidelia Aletta Blythe Domina Delicia Aurelia Grace Isabel Griselda Gwyneth Pearl Ruby Coral Lily Iris Briar-Rose. The appearance of evil fairy Pernicia is right on schedule, but just as her curse falls, Katriona rushes forward and deflects it, unintentionally resulting in the princess' secretly being put into her care. Rosie (the princess) grows and thrives, develops a knack for communicating with animals, and remains ignorant of her royal birth and of Pernicia's curse. When her true circumstances are revealed, Rosie rises to the challenge of a final confrontation with the wicked fairy, remembering grimly that "magic can't do everything." McKinley's take on "Sleeping Beauty" is put forth in words dense with sensual detail. The author sets her simple but elegant plot right along the boundary line between fairy tale and fantasy; she stays close to the traditional tale but decorates it so ornately it is just barely recognizable. A believable, fully imagined fantasy world is patiently constructed, and the acceptance and integration of magic into the daily lives of the non-magical is logically achieved. While the success of the heroine is never in doubt, the fun lies in following McKinley's meandering garden path all the way till the end. Major characters are complex and motivated; even supporting players are given a character-defining action or turn of phrase that makes them notable. McKinley has a lighter touch here than in *Rose Daughter* (BCCB 10/98) or even *Beauty* (12/78), and, while this retelling is undeniably wordy, a more relaxed style and a steady but promising pace make it a rich and rewarding read. JMD

MYERS, WALTER DEAN *Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly*; illus. by Leonard Jenkins. HarperCollins, 2000 34p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027708-4 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027707-6 \$15.95

R Gr. 3-6

Myers combines quotes from interviews and speeches with a journalistic presentation and evocative, photo-based mixed-media images in this succinct but effective biography of civil rights activist Malcolm X. Myers concentrates on the journey of Malcolm X's life, describing the arc of incidents that influenced his politics: his career as a street hustler, his incarceration in prison, his conversion to Islam, his rise to power under Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims, his philosophy altering trip to Mecca, and his assassination in New York City. Myers' take on the slain leader is admiring but not adulatory; he clearly and concisely follows the development of Malcolm's radical politics and the incidents that shaped and altered his path. A timeline documents important dates in the subject's life and includes quotes from speeches and interviews, which give some small inkling of the power of Malcolm X's rhetoric. Factual glitches (Myers states Malcolm X had

four daughters, when he actually had six) and a lack of clear source notes (it's not always evident who is being quoted, let alone from where) are a problem. Despite these flaws, this is an accessible, balanced beginning biography on a controversial and influential African-American leader. JMD

PEARSON, MARY E. *David v. God*. Harcourt, 2000 [144p]
ISBN 0-15-202058-6 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

David is on a high-school field trip when the teacher-driven van he and several classmates are traveling in goes off the road, resulting in their deaths. Although their companions adjust to heaven with alacrity, David and classmate Marie do not; David fusses and fumes and finally challenges God to a debate. Most of the novel concentrates on David and Marie's eventual rapport with each another, and on David's changing point of view regarding what is important in life. Pearson wisely avoids too many heavenly details, concentrating on the developing relationship between Marie and David (and David and God) instead. While the writing tries too hard to be relevant (calling God "the bomb" already dates this title), Pearson has a sense of humor that asserts itself throughout, leavening what could have been a tedious diatribe. Theologically, the premise is unwieldy and doesn't bear close scrutiny; the exposition is based more on convenience than logic, and the ending is never really in doubt. Nonetheless, readers looking for something a little out of the ordinary may be attracted to this unusual fantasy. JMD

PHILIP, NEIL, comp. *It's a Woman's World: A Century of Women's Voices in Poetry*. Dutton, 2000 [96p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-525-46328-3 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 9-12

Philip, compiler of various useful anthologies (*Singing America*, BCCB 7/95, etc.), here turns his hand to female poets of the twentieth century. The emphasis is on English and American poets, but the collection is wide ranging culturally (poets from Japan, Romania, India, Russia, China, Kenya, and a multitude of other countries are included) as well as stylistically (there's Dorothy Parker and Anna Akhmatova, Mari Evans and Edith Södergran). Some of the poems will have a terrific impact on young readers: Judith Wright's "Request to a Year" tells of her great-great-grandmother's sketching of the distant drama that could have resulted in her son's death; Linda Hogan's "The Truth Is" illuminates the tension between her Chickasaw and white heritages. Others, however, demand more context or sophistication than teens can generally bring to poetry, which makes much of the anthology a rather daunting affair. Nor is there much help from the end matter, which only provides a mention of national affiliation (with note of cultural antecedence for American writers but not for those from other countries) within the author index and no biographical information, notes, or dates for poems. The intent may have been to leave the verse open for New Critical appreciation, but the result is an odd homogenizing of female experience that restricts rather than expands the world depicted. Still, the assortment is valuable, and browsers looking to expand their poetic acquaintanceship will doubtless find some rewarding offerings. Eloquent black and white photographs (of women though not necessarily by them) open each section, offering vivid images of women from various points on the globe and in the century. DS

PLATT, RANDALL BETH *The Likes of Me*. Delacorte, 2000 244p
 ISBN 0-385-32692-0 \$15.95 R Gr. 7-12

Cordy's physical appearance is startling; she is the albino child of a Chinese mother and a white father. Since her mother's tragic death, her emotionally distant father has kept her cloistered in his house on the hill, which he occupies as boss of a lumber mill in a remote Pacific Northwest lumber town. At fourteen, Cordy resents her father's restrictions; inspired by a young lumberjack named Squirrel, she runs away to Seattle. There, thanks to her striking appearance and a little training in tricks of the trade, she becomes a successful fortune teller; the spiritualism boom is in full swing in the summer of 1918, and Cordy's services are sought after by crowds of wealthy Seattle-ites. Her success is also noted by Dr. Ridenour, who collects and markets human freaks in sideshows, and the adventure turns thriller, with myriad twists that eventually involve everyone from unusual mystics to Cordy's lumber town family. A mounting series of coincidences does not detract from the suspense, which Platt keeps taut until the end. Opening lumber town scenes are slow to unfold but rife with intriguing historical detail, and Cordy's adventures in the underground world of profitable mysticism offer an unusual window into popular culture of the early 1900s. Once Cordy's travels begin, the plot roars along like a log flume running down a mountain, and readers will be swept breathlessly along. KM

PLUM-UCCI, CAROL *The Body of Christopher Creed*. Harcourt, 2000 [256p]
 ISBN 0-15-202388-7 \$17.00
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

Torey Adams, golden boy, harassed Christopher Creed as much as anyone else in their high-school class; Creed, a social misfit and irritating to boot, seemed to invite abuse. After sending a (possible) suicide email note to the high school principal, Creed disappears; when he fails to reappear or be found, rumors of homicide in the woods begin to fly. There is no body or indication of foul play, but that doesn't stop Mrs. Creed—she is bound and determined someone will be punished for what happened to her oldest son. Her malevolent eye falls on Bo Richardson, an apparent hoodlum from the wrong side of the tracks, and for a time it looks as if she's going to succeed in railroading him into jail. Torey and friend Ali (now Bo's girlfriend) attempt to clear Bo, but their efforts do little more than add to the appearance of guilt. Plum-Ucci limns the social hierarchy of a community resistant to both change and truth, and her control is evident in the unsensational handling of what could easily have degenerated into a lurid slice of small-town life. Torey's discovery of a body in the woods is a devastating moment, but even more devastating is his realization of some unpleasant realities about adults with feet of clay. This is a complex, credible look at alienation, compassion, loyalty, and cruelty among young and other adults. JMD

PRESSLER, MIRJAM *Anne Frank: A Hidden Life*; tr. by Anthea Bell. Dutton, 2000 [192p] illus. with photographs
 ISBN 0-525-46330-5 \$15.99
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 10 up

Many aspects of Anne Frank's life apart from her diary have been illuminated in other volumes (*Anne Frank, Beyond the Diary: A Photographic Remembrance*, BCCB

11/93), but Pressler offers an unusual presentation of the people in Anne Frank's life. Beginning with Anne's father's return to their wartime hiding place, Pressler provides historical context to invoke a sense of the personal devastation Otto Frank might have felt when faced with the loss of his entire family and then, upon reading Anne's diary, the loss of Anne's talent as well. While other chapters are less intense, dealing with topics that range from historical events and their effects on the annex occupants to intimate information about Anne's physical development, Pressler presents the available facts to create an emotionally charged vision of human survival in pressing circumstances. Those circumstances, despite being necessary to understanding interpersonal tensions in hiding, constitute a large amount of complex information that may be daunting to many fans of Anne's more easily readable diary. The book is neither browsable nor swift reading, and Pressler's exegesis further burdens the narrative, as she inserts her own opinions between the reader and Anne's experiences ("I cannot help wondering what it was like for [Anne] later in Auschwitz, in Bergen Belsen. Could she retain her belief in God there? I would very much like to think so"). Nonetheless, teachers will find excellent excerpts to read aloud in connection with curriculum, and readers eager for more detailed information about Anne Frank will appreciate the windows Pressler opens into the emotional lives of the annex dwellers. A chronology of Anne Frank's life, notes, and a bibliography are included. KM

PRINGLE, LAURENCE *Bats!: Strange and Wonderful*; illus. by Meryl Henderson. Boyds Mills, 2000 32p
ISBN 1-56397-327-8 \$15.95 R Gr. 2-5

Pringle lends his considerable talent for explaining science to young children to the task of presenting bats, unsensationally and with enthusiasm. His lively approach is chatty and conversational without being condescending. Youngsters will immediately be hooked by the opening text ("If you were a bat, you could stay up all night. You could hang by your thumbs, or hang upside down by your toenails") and a riveting illustration of a hanging bat, wings outspread, mouth open, showing tiny teeth ("When a bat is afraid it opens its mouth wide and shows its teeth"). The book then discusses different types of bats, the fact that they're mammals (the only kind that fly), where they live, what they eat, and how they hunt. A section "To Learn More about Bats" contains suggestions for additional reading and the mailing address and URL for Bat Conservation International (which has handy instructions for constructing bat houses, as well as links to other bat-sites). The book design features framed full-page watercolor illustrations against backgrounds of black, purple, and blue, along with views of bats in their natural environments. JMD

RASCHKA, CHRIS *Ring! Yo?*; written and illus. by Chris Raschka. Jackson/DK Ink, 2000 40p
ISBN 0-7894-2614-5 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

One side of a telephone conversation is depicted in this follow-up to Raschka's *Yo! Yes?* (BCCB 4/93), which featured the same duo of friends. In this title, the white boy answers the phone, and the reader gets his side of the conversation as he talks to the caller on the other end (revealed as the African-American boy at the conclusion). The conversation is puzzling, but Raschka includes a final "key" to the exchange at the end of the book that enlightens readers to one possible version of

the scenario. The concluding question, "Or was it something else?," gives readers carte blanche to imaginatively construct a conversation of their own. The mixed-media illustrations (watercolor, pastels, and cut paper) evince Raschka's carefree but expressive style. The boy is placed in the center of the composition, so his reactions to the conversation are paramount. The simple text is set in large type above his head, and emphasis is created by altering the size of the type and the boy's body language. The appeal of this title lies in the humor and mini-suspense: the comic responses of the character and his apparent dismay will attract readers curious as to what the conversation is actually about. While as a stand-alone picture book there isn't much to this, it may well be useful in the classroom as a spur to a creative writing project or dramatic play. JMD

RICHELIE, JASON *Weapons: Designing the Tools of War.*

See under Aaseng, Nathan, p. 266, for review.

ROOP, PETER *Good-bye for Today: The Diary of a Young Girl at Sea;* by Peter and Connie Roop; illus. by Thomas B. Allen. Atheneum, 2000 [48p]
ISBN 0-689-82222-7 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-5

Ordered by her mother to keep a journal, Laura records the events aboard her father's whaling ship, the *Monticello*, in 1871. Laura has always regarded Honolulu as home, but following this cruise she will return to her relatives in New Bedford and enter school to become a "proper lady," a state of life for which the nine-year-old frequently questions her aptitude. Until the fateful day arrives, she soaks up all the maritime adventure she can, sailing with her father in the boats and peering out of the crow's nest, coping with weevil-infested hardtack, weathering a typhoon, and finally abandoning ship with family and crew when the *Monticello* finds itself hopelessly ice-bound. Fictional Laura and her diary are based on the lives and writing of two actual whalers' daughters; Laura's entries seldom vary in tone, with her account of the raging typhoon only marginally more exciting than her observations about fresh duck eggs. Descriptions of daily life do have a ring of authenticity, though, and the brief entries should appeal to new chapter-book readers making their maiden voyage into historical fiction. Sepia vignettes, several double page watercolor spreads, a glossary (not as comprehensive as landlubbers might wish), and a note on historical background are included. EB

ROSS, ADRIENNE *In the Quiet.* Delacorte, 2000 148p
ISBN 0-385-32678-5 \$14.95

R* Gr. 5-8

Samantha, known as Sammy, has been missing a big piece of the world since the tragic death of her mother; she and her father struggle on ("I look at him in the dim kitchen light and realize he knows nothing about me. The thing I like most is that he doesn't try to hide this"), but she's hopeful when her mother's sister comes to stay that it'll be like having her mother back again. It's not: Constance is a rover, a mysterious finder of missing objects, who loves her young niece but is trying to find a vanished object of her sister's. With the aid of her friend Bones, determined tomboy and digger par excellence, Sammy herself seeks the lost, searching unconsciously for her mother's larger legacy while she combs the town for concrete magic to make things right. Ross writes with a stealthy lyricism, Sammy's

plainspoken present-tense narration revelatory in its observations without being forced into implausible poetry. Sammy's small-town world, especially the abandoned amusement park that, in its heyday, brought her parents together, is evocatively realized, and Bones' determined insistence on local magic seems not entirely unreasonable in light of that milieu and the powerful buried secrets the girls do uncover. A strong yet tender portrait of adjustment to loss, this will resonate with readers familiar with the longing for the buried past. DS

RUMFORD, JAMES *Seeker of Knowledge: The Man Who Deciphered Egyptian Hieroglyphs*; written and illus. by James Rumford. Houghton, 2000 32p
ISBN 0-395-97934-X \$15.00 R Gr. 2-5

This attractive picture-book biography traces the career of nineteenth-century Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion from his childhood fascination with stories of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign to his race to crack the "code" of the Rosetta Stone and his eventual breakthrough discovery that hieroglyphs can represent sounds as well as words. Although Rumford's prose is occasionally a bit overblown ("‘Thothmes!’ Jean-François suddenly exclaimed, and the rushing sound of the pharaoh's name, as if carried on wings across the centuries, filled the room"), it ably conveys the passionate excitement with which Champollion pursued his life's work ("‘I have the key!’ Then he collapsed. He had not eaten. He had not slept. For five days, he lay near death"). Watercolor paintings dominated by rich, inky blues visually underscore the drama, while hieroglyphs decoded in sidebars and incorporated into the narrative cleverly convey the relationship between the stylized image and the idea it represents. Historical notes, source notes, and a brief glossary of hieroglyphs used within the text are appended. Expect this title to perform double duty among Egypt buffs who read for pleasure and social studies teachers on the prowl for fresh, classroom-friendly material on ancient civilizations. EB

SILVERSTEIN, ALVIN *Pocket Pets*; by Alvin Silverstein, Virginia Silverstein, and Laura Silverstein Nunn. Twenty-First Century, 2000 48p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7613-1370-2 \$21.90 Ad Gr. 3-7

Another in the Silversteins' series on pet possibilities (see *A Pet or Not?*, BCCB 9/99), this one treats pets on the small side (though the title shouldn't be taken literally for some of the larger entries unless one is prepared to do damage to animal and pocket). The ten pets here range from the familiar (the hamster) to the unfamiliar (the degu), each receiving a picture and some "fast facts," plus two or three pages of more in-depth information and further Internet resources. The overviews contain useful information, and the book particularly emphasizes the needs of various animals for companionship with their own kind and the different relationships of the different species to their human caretakers ("Mice are not likely to play with you the way rats will"). The collection seems a bit arbitrary (why include the duprasi but not the sugar glider?); some of the text is blandly general and some a little confusing (if the pets known as gerbils aren't true gerbils, what is a true gerbil?); while some of the pictures are terrific, some are problematic—you don't get much of a view of the degu, and the rat crawling through garbage doesn't seem to be the domestic variety. Still, this is a useful showcase for little critters that will appeal to the bigger critters that yearn for them. DS

SIMMONS, JANE *Daisy's Day Out*; ISBN 0-316-79763-4; *Daisy Says Cool!*; ISBN 0-316-79764-2. Each book: written and illus. by Jane Simmons. Little, 2000 8p \$5.95 Ad 1-3 yrs

Using the same vividly colored palette familiar from her other Daisy books, Simmons provides two new adventures for Daisy in board-book format. *Daisy Says Cool!* has the young heroine cooing in response to all of the pond life ("Zub, zub," buzzes the bee. 'Munch, munch,' chomps the caterpillar. And Daisy says, 'Cool!"). Her travels of course end with cozy reunion with Mama Duck. *Daisy's Day Out* follows Daisy and her mother as they traipse through the pond growth to see Granny ("We're off to see Granny./ Down and under Weepy Willow,/ trip, trip, trop!"), ending each spread with a luscious three-word onomatopoeia. Though the oversized board books and effective art make Daisy right for sharing during babies' lapsit or toddler programs, the unusually short length (even for board books) detracts from the books' effectiveness. EAB

VINCENT, GABRIELLE *A Day, a Dog*; illus. by Gabrielle Vincent. Front Street, 2000 64p ISBN 1-886910-51-0 \$16.95 R Gr. 2 up

This simple and simply told story, first published nearly twenty years ago in France, relies solely on black-and-white sketches to convey its narrative. As the title suggests, the protagonist is a dog; dumped from a car in the middle of nowhere, he's abandoned and confused. He seeks his owner in passing vehicles, causing a grim multi-car pileup in the process; he then finds his way to the seashore, then to a town, and finally to a nearly empty road where he meets a kindred spirit in a human traveler who welcomes him. The drawings employ energetic charcoal-smudgy lines that stand out starkly on the elongated satiny white pages. The sinewy curves of the dog are eloquent, expressing his despair, eagerness, hope, and loneliness; the minimalist landscapes, particularly the shimmering beach and the unfolding road, are impressively conveyed. The sad faces of the final meeting may slightly puzzle young viewers, but it's clear enough that a partnership has been formed. The effect of the textless story is similar to speechless film fables such as *The Red Balloon*; kids accustomed to the panels of visual narrative in comics will take easily to this form of storytelling and this satisfying not-so-shaggy dog story. DS

WALSH, MELANIE *Do Donkeys Dance?*; written and illus. by Melanie Walsh. Houghton, 2000 [32p] ISBN 0-618-00330-4 \$15.00 Reviewed from galleys R 2-5 yrs

Playing on the preschooler's delight in being right, Walsh's text asks a series of nonsensical questions ("Do pigs buzz around flowers?"), followed by true answers ("No, bees buzz around flowers"). Large, bright creatures contrast with saturated background colors that bleed to the edges, and a single background color unites each double-page "wrong" spread with its "right" counterpart. The text is unusual in that the subject of the question, not the verb, is altered in the answer (e.g., "Do hippos hop?" is answered with "No, fleas do" rather than answered with what hippos actually do), and preschool teachers will easily launch discussions about

action verbs from this engaging text. After each question is read, young listeners will eagerly join with the reader on the "No" refrain, proud of their knowledge of the way things are. Although the ending may jar young participants, when for the first time the answer is "Yes" instead of "No," another reading will allow listeners to learn all the right answers, and they'll clamor to hear it again. KM

WATSON, ESTHER PEARL, comp. *The Pain Tree and Other Teenage Angst-Ridden Poetry*; comp. and illus. by Esther Pearl Watson and Mark Todd. Houghton, 2000 64p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-618-01558-2 \$16.00

Paper ed. ISBN 0-618-04758-1 \$6.95

Ad Gr. 7-12

You'd be wrong to expect a lot of yuks from a book clearly labeled "Teenage Angst-Ridden Poetry," but the coyness of the title might also make a self-conscious teen browsing the poetry shelf suspicious about how seriously the adults who collected and illustrated these poems are taking them. Two introductory notes (from the team that illustrated the boys' and the girls' poems respectively) do little to clarify the book's purpose, but do explain the evolution of the project from a zine dedicated to the poetry of then teens to a book containing more contemporary teen voices, many of them discovered on the World Wide Web. These heartfelt poems about love, in-groups and outsiders, and family life are uneven in quality, though some, such as "Blush" (about a young girl's shock at hearing adult women "talk about their sex/ like we're leaky faucets") and "Chalk" (in which love is compared to a piece of chalk that starts out new and ends "a small, tiny piece/ That cannot be held anymore"), are original or thoughtful. Others capture a youthful cynicism/idealism that is complemented by the accessible symbolism and contemporary fashions of the edgy poster-like illustrations and spot art created in response to each poem. An appendix of brief zine-style bios of the teen (and former-teen) poets offers insight into the attitudes of the writers and the occasions that called forth the poems. Teen poets looking to check out the competition could start here. FK

YEP, LAURENCE *The Magic Paintbrush*; illus. by Suling Wang. HarperCollins, 2000 [96p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028200-2 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028199-5 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

After a fire destroys his home and leaves his parents dead, young Steve must live with his stoic grandfather and his grandfather's childhood friend Mr. Fong. Steve's solace is painting, but he suffers an "F" on a school assignment when his too-worn paintbrush leaves brush strokes in triplicate. Without resources to buy a new one, Steve returns home only to discover with surprise that his (usually detached) grandfather has a solution: a magic paintbrush that allows them to enter the objects they paint on the walls. Yep weaves Chinese culture and folkloric motifs seamlessly into the novel, but he depends on stock characters, predictable plot elements, and convenient resolution to tell his story. Readers will still be drawn to the emotional reconciliation between Steve and his grandfather, Steve's rise to the status of hero, and the power of creating new worlds with the stroke of a brush. Full-page black-and-white illustrations and decorative chapter headings provide a visual counterpoint to the text. EAB

YOLEN, JANE, ad. *Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls*; illus. by Susan Guevara. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2000 [128p]
ISBN 0-15-202047-0 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-7

Thirteen traditional tales from as many cultures feature heroes clever, honorable, brave, and female. The stories of Atalanta the Huntress (Greek), Li Chi the serpent slayer (Chinese), Brave Woman (White River Sioux), Molly Whuppie (English), and nine others are retold here from detailed sources (noted) with an eye toward opening up "the back storeroom of folklore" wherein these stories have always existed. Despite clueless and patronizing epigraphs ("A great medieval knight in shining armor—and she's a woman!"), the individual stories are capably and accessibly rendered, with intermittent flashes of the romantic and striking language evident in Yolen's best work. The admirable heroes tend to blend into one another, however, and their lack of differentiation contributes to an unfortunate tonal sameness. The endings have a tendency to trail off into anticlimax, and the uniform nobility of the heroes is never in doubt, which both flattens characterizations and effectively limits the suspense. Yolen's introduction ("An Open Letter to My Daughter and Granddaughters") provides insight into her motives for compiling this collection and gives some background on historical women warriors and leaders; extensive notes on the stories and a bibliography are included. Illustrations not seen. JMD



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

RECENTLY RECEIVED:

Crowe, Chris. *Presenting Mildred D. Taylor*. Twayne, 1999. (Twayne's United States Author Series/Young Adult Authors.) ISBN 0-8037-1687-4; \$32.00. 162p. illus. with photographs.

This eminently serviceable series turns to formative influence Mildred D. Taylor, examining her life and literary contributions in a text accessible to young adult readers as well as to adult professionals. Endnotes, a bibliography, and an index enhance the volume's usefulness.

Elleman, Barbara. *Tomie dePaola: His Art & Stories*. Putnam, 1999. ISBN 0-399-23129-3; \$35.00. 208p. illus. with photographs. Reviewed from galleys.

This glossy, oversized volume, chock-full of reproductions of dePaola's art, offers an extensive look into the life and work of this enduringly popular author/artist; copious appendices and notes are included.

Chisholm, Anne. *Rumer Godden: A Storyteller's Life*. Greenwillow, 1999. ISBN 0-688-16944-9; \$24.00. 333p. illus. with photographs.

Godden's life, with her long and eventful tenure in India and her struggle with the demands of writing and family, has an epic sweep in its own right; Chisholm examines Godden's work, both for children and adults, as well as the noted author's life in this hefty but readable biography.

Marciano, John Bemelmans. *Bemelmans: The Life & Art of Madeline's Creator*. Viking, 1999. ISBN 0-670-88460-X; \$35.00. 152p. illus. with photographs.

Bemelmans' grandson has pulled together an elegant compilation of art, notes, interviews, and linking text in this lavish book that offers both visual pleasure and intriguing insight into Bemelmans' career and creative labors; notes, a chronology, bibliographies, and an index are included.

THE "WE THOUGHT YOU'D FIND THIS ODD BUT INTERESTING" DEPARTMENT:

"Harry Plodder and the Kidney Stone," *Mad*, March 2000, No. 391, 21-8.

The venerable yet sophomoric vehicle for satire offers an irreverent take on the unstoppable phenomenon of Harry Potter.

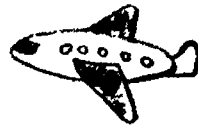
SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

- Adoption-fiction: Brooke; Creech
ADVENTURE STORIES: Karr
 African Americans: Fradin; Myers
 African Americans-fiction: Fogelin
 American Indians: Bruchac
 American Indians-stories: Harjo
 Animals-stories: Carle; Ernst;
 London; McGrory; Walsh
Anthropology: Arnold
 Art and artists-fiction: Yep
 Asian Americans-fiction: Yep
 Aunts-fiction: Ross
 Aviation-stories: McGrory
 Babies-stories: Gardella
 Baseball: Gibbons *Baseball*
 Bats: Pringle
BIOGRAPHIES: Adler; Bruchac;
 Fradin; Myers; Pressler; Rumford
BOARD BOOKS: Ernst; Simmons
 Brothers-fiction: Brooke; Calvert;
 Elgar
 Cats: George *Cat*
 Cats-stories: Harjo
 Child abuse-fiction: Conly
 Chinese-Americans-fiction: Heisel
 Civil rights: Fradin; Myers
 Crime and criminals-fiction: Clark;
 Crowe; Kerr; Plum-Ucci
 Death and dying-fiction: Carey;
 Caseley; Creech; Crowe;
 Danziger; Plum-Ucci; Ross; Yep
 Dogs: George *Dog*
 Dogs-fiction: Vincent
 Dogs-stories: Lloyd
Drama: Fleischman
 Ducks-stories: Simmons
 Egypt: Rumford
 Email-fiction: Danziger
 Engineering: Aaseng
EPISTOLARY FICTION:
 Danziger
ESSAYS: Giblin
Ethics and values: Battle-Lavert;
 Calvert; Carmi; Fogelin; Heisel;
 Kimmel
 Families-fiction: Creech
FANTASY: Bell; Cox; McKinley;
 Yep
 Farms-fiction: Brooke
 Fashion: Hoobler
 Fathers and daughters-fiction:
 Carey; Caseley; Crowe; Fogelin;
 Platt; Ross
FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES:
 Battle-Lavert; McKinley; Yolen
 Food and eating-fiction: Cox; Elgar
 Food and eating-stories: Gardella
 Friendship-fiction: Conly;
 Danziger; Fogelin; Freeman;
 Kerr; Kimmel; Pearson; Plum-
 Ucci; Raschka; Ross
FUNNY STORIES: Lichtenheld
 God-fiction: Pearson
 Grandfathers-fiction: Bowdish;
 Creech; Yep
 Heaven-fiction: Pearson
HISTORICAL FICTION: Brooke;
 Carey; Conly; Heisel; Karr;
 McGill; Platt; Roop
History, U.S.: Adler; Bruchac;
 Fradin; Hoobler; Myers
History, world: Arnold; Giblin

Holocaust, the: Pressler
 Homeless-fiction: Clark
 Hugs-stories: London
 Inventors and inventions: Aaseng
 Journalism-fiction: Cox
Language arts: Fleischman; Giblin;
 Herrera; Rumford; Walsh
 Latinos-stories: Herrera
 Magic-fiction: McKinley; Yep
 Military history: Richie
 Mothers and daughters-fiction:
 Crowe
 Mothers and fathers-fiction: Carey
 Mothers and sons-fiction: Jones
 Mothers-stories: Carle; London
 Moving-fiction: Bowditch; Freeman
 MYSTERIES: Plum-Ucci
Nature study: Pringle
Oral interpretation: Fleischman
 Orphans-fiction: Brooke
 Pets: *George Cat*; *George Dog*;
 Silverstein
 Pirates: Lichtenheld
 POETRY: Fleischman; Philip;
 Watson
 Racism-fiction: Carmi; Fogelin;
 Heisel
Reading aloud: Philip
Reading, reluctant: Lichtenheld;
 Watson
 Refugees-fiction: Hiçyilmaz
 Religion-fiction: Pearson
Religious education: Pearson
 Restaurants-fiction: Cox
 Runaways-fiction: Clark
 Running-fiction: Fogelin
 School-fiction: Freeman; Jones;
 Plum-Ucci
 School-stories: Herrera
 Sisters-fiction: Calvert
 Slavery-fiction: McGill

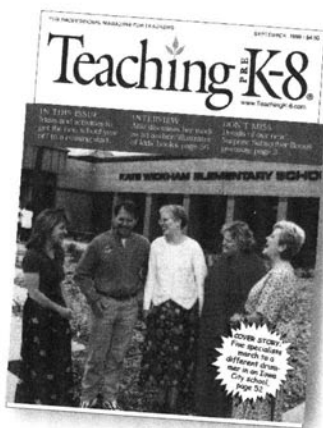
Soccer: Gibbons *Soccer*
Social studies: Giblin; Hoobler;
 Rumford
 South, the-fiction: Conly; McGill
 Spiritualism-fiction: Platt
 Sports: Gibbons
 Stepfathers-fiction: Freeman
Storytelling: Battle-Lavert;
Storytime: Carle; Lloyd; London;
 Simmons;
 Suicide-fiction: Calvert
 Telephones-fiction: Raschka
 Uncles and aunts-fiction: Conly
 Uncles-fiction: Cox;
 Voyages and travel-fiction: Crowe;
 Roop
 War-fiction: Carmi; Hiçyilmaz
 Weapons and warfare: Richie
 Whales-fiction: Bell
Women's studies: Adler; Bruchac;
 Fradin; Philip; Yolen
 WORDLESS BOOKS: Vincent
 World War II: Pressler
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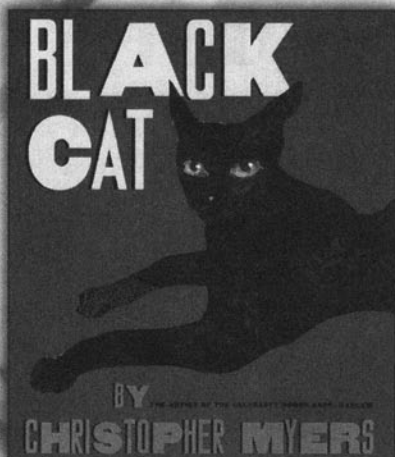
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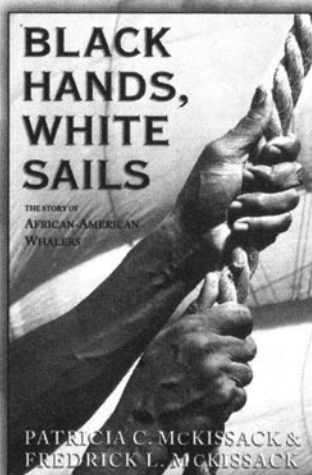
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—Pointer review / *Kirkus Reviews*



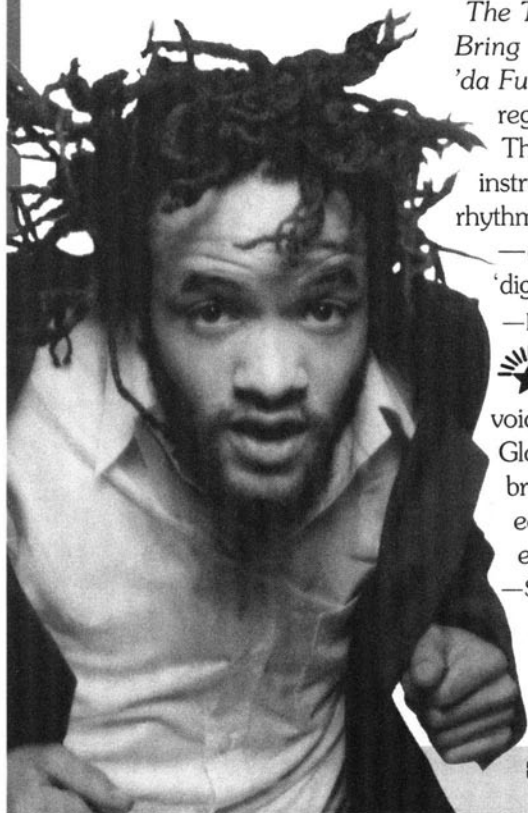
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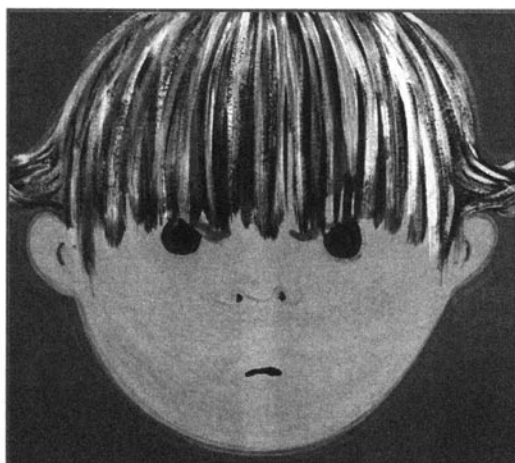
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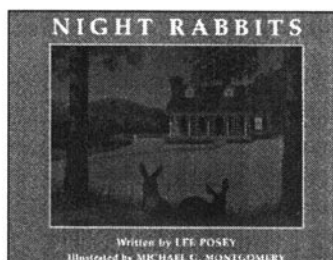
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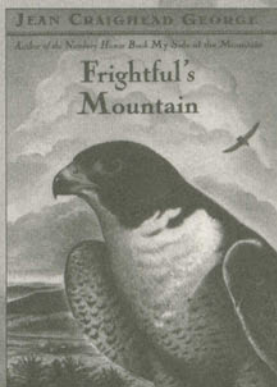
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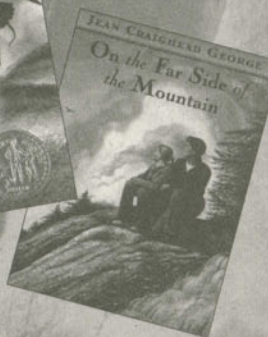
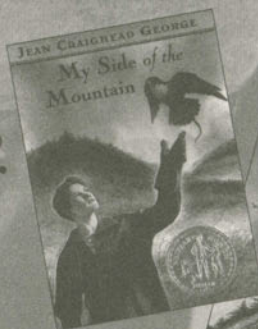
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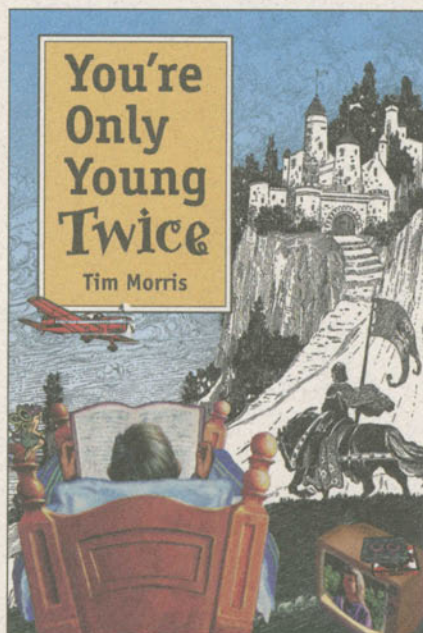


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